

Return of the Fireflies: World Premiere

Short Synopsis

In the heart of bustling Bali, Dutch artist Daan Roosegaarde and a team of local Balinese have spent three years nurturing a dream: a Firefly Garden where light returns to the night. This intimate love story between people and nature captures flickers in the dark as courtship, longing, and reunion. Rooted in cultural heritage and reimagining ecotourism, it calls for a new harmony, for we may be the last generation to see the fireflies.

Long Synopsis

Amid the motorbikes, neon cafés, and restless energy of Canggu, Bali, a quiet revolution glows in the shadows. For three years, Dutch artist Daan Roosegaarde and local Balinese collaborators have worked to bring back a species that had almost disappeared: the firefly. In Indonesia, these small beacons are more than creatures; they are threads of cultural memory, woven into stories, songs, and nights beneath the stars.

This film is an intimate, luminous love story between people and nature. Each flicker in the dark is a signal, a call to a mate, a whisper of longing, a brief reunion in the night. Yet their fading glow carries a warning: we may be the last generation to witness this living light.

Shot under red light invisible to fireflies, the film enters their world without disturbance, offering a rare, unguarded view of their silent courtship. More than a document, it is a poetic call to action, imagining a kind of eco-tourism where human presence restores rather than erodes, and where the balance between people and the natural world can be rebuilt, spark by spark.

Director's Statement

When I first arrived in Canggu in Bali, the air was alive with noise. Motorbikes weaving through narrow streets, music spilling from cafés, tourists chasing sunsets. But at night, I noticed something missing. The darkness felt empty. Speaking with locals, I learned that fireflies, once so common they lit up rice fields like constellations, had almost vanished. For generations, their light had been part of Bali's cultural soul, yet their absence revealed how far we had drifted from nature.

I wanted to change that. Together with a devoted team of local Balinese, we created the Firefly Garden and a one-of-a-kind breeding program, a place where art and science meet to heal what was lost. Here, biology becomes design, and design becomes devotion. Every glowing spark is the result of years of care, patience, and belief that nature will answer if we choose to listen.

Return of the Fireflies is my love letter to this journey, to the nights spent waiting for light, to the moments when it returned, and to a vision of Bali's future where nature and people share the same stage again. Above all, it is a reminder: we may be the last generation to see the fireflies, unless we act. - Daan Roosegaarde

Credits

Director: Daan Roosegaarde

Cinematography: Mufti Bahari

Producer: Mufti Bahari
Music: Grigorios Nikolaou
Voice: Sarah Wesley
Actors: Cindy Chayani Mangampang, Mimi Korompis, Fabian Peri
Camera Operator: Yoga Fulka
Gaffer: Dwi Putra Imawan
Photographer: Leon Karsten
Production Assistant: Jafer Tanos
Assistant Director: Myooz
Crew Assistants: Nauval Mustafidz, Rontas
Special thanks to: Pak Wayan and his team Bring back the light and Nini van der Waals

Awards & Festivals

- Best Best Microfilm — Touchstone Independent Film Festival, USA
- Award Winner Short Film — Bracciano Film and Arts Festival, Italy
- Finalist — International Film Festival The Hague, the Netherlands
- Winner Short Film — Sundarban International Film Festival, India
- Award Winner — 4th Dimension Independent Film Festival, Indonesia
- Outstanding Achievement Award — Sundarban International Film Festival, India
- Official Selection — Kyoto Independent Film Festival, Japan
- Official Selection — Wildlife Conservation Film Festival, Mexico
- Officially Selection — Moonlight International Film Festival, Sweden
- Official Selection — New York Film Festival, USA
- Winner — Swedish International Film Festival
- Official Selection — Nashville Independent Filmmakers Festival, USA
- Official Selection — Mumbai Shorts International Film Fest
- Official Selection — Hawaii International Film Awards
- Semi Finalist — Austin International Art Festival, USA
- Semi Finalist — Melbourne Independent Film Festival
- Semi Finalist — Paris International Short Festival
- Semi Finalist — Rotterdam Independent Film Festival

- Award Winner — Austin International Art Festival US
- Official Selection — Hong Kong Indie Film Festival
- Official Selection — Tokyo ShortFest
- Official Selection — Rome International Short Festival
- Official Selection — Dubai Independent Film Festival
- Official Selection — Moondust Helsinki Film Awards
- Award Winner — Hawaii International Film Awards
- Official Selection — Nocturna Brooklyn Film Festival
- Official Selection — FilmHaus Germany

Film Details

Original Language: English

Genre: Documentary / Art Film

Length: 1.21 minutes

Year: 2025

Country of Production: Indonesia, Netherlands

Language: English (minimal narration, natural soundscapes)

Debut Film: No